



## Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

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# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

## Background and Instructions

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### Overview

In the spring of 2020, the **Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming [YPQT-ON]** was commissioned by the Collaboration Council as a part of their mission to support quality youth development online learning programs. Developed by Sharp Insight, LLC, the instrument is specifically designed for youth program personnel to evaluate their online learning program quality and improve on key program components that lead to positive development for both youth and staff. Online learning is learning that involves an internet connection and the use of online tools/platforms. Online learning may also include virtual face-to-face interactions and/or blended online and in-person instruction.

This observation-based tool is structured around five categories: Program Structure, Program Content, Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction & Engagement. In addition to the observation tool itself, there is a supplemental worksheet to support scoring, reflection, action planning, and follow-up visits, as applicable. The YPQT-ON is meant to accompany quality improvement processes such as health and safety compliance, self-assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and improvement planning.

### Community of Practice

The Montgomery County Collaboration Council's Youth Development Community of Practice offers professional learning opportunities for youth development practitioners serving young people in the County. The Community of Practice brings to our youth development practitioners a coordinated system of ongoing training with experienced and knowledgeable facilitators, expert-led symposia, online courses, and access to e-learning resources, such as a library and recorded webinars. At the core of the Community of Practice is peer networking to share best practices and innovative program strategies that promote positive youth outcomes in the County's young people. As part of a full range of professional learning opportunities, our Community of Practice offers capacity build opportunities that address each of the five domains included in the Excel Beyond the Bell Youth Program Quality Tool: program structure, program content, safe environment, supportive environment, interaction & engagement. For information and registration for upcoming workshops please visit: <https://collaborationcouncil.org/online-calendar/>

### About Us

Since 1992, The Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families has brought together public and private service providers to address the needs of Montgomery County, Maryland's children under the age of 18, and their families. One in four county residents fits this youthful profile. Designated as a Local Management Board by the State of Maryland, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council's purpose is to be a catalyst so that agencies and other groups can collaborate to achieve positive results in the community. Now a quasi public non-profit, the Collaboration Council's work continues to grow and change to meet the ever-evolving needs of the county's residents. For more information, please visit: <https://collaborationcouncil.org/>

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming



## Recommended Instructions for Planning, Observation, and Follow-Up

### **BEFORE: Prior to the use of the YPQT-ON, it is recommended that Program Observers and Youth Program Personnel:**

1. Familiarize themselves with the tool so they are aligned in their understanding of the purpose, process, categories, and items.
2. Determine how the tool will be used in the program (e.g., peer, internal leadership, and/or external assessment).
3. Schedule TWO events, including: a) an online program visit so the staff member(s) being observed are aware of the online guest and can prepare for this structured opportunity for observation, learning, and growth, and b) a follow-up video, phone, or in-person meeting, ideally held within 2 weeks of observation, for a review of evidence and scoring, reflective discussion, and action planning.

### **DURING: When observing an online program, it is recommended that Program Observers (e.g., peer, internal, or external observers):**

1. Prepare for their site visit by confirming with staff the time and connection information, ideally allowing observation to include program start and/or end. If feasible, following arrival into the online space and an optional introduction, the observer will be off camera and muted.
2. Throughout the observation, take notes that are factual, specific, and, when possible, include quotes from staff and youth. Observers are asked to not complete the YPQT-ON while observing.
3. Prior to leaving, if feasible without program interruption, thank the program personnel and review next steps (e.g., follow-up meeting date).

### **AFTER: After visiting a site, it is recommended that Observers (e.g., peer, internal, or external observers):**

1. Review and then use the program observation notes as evidence to include in the YPQT-ON's "Evidence" boxes.
2. Use the evidence recorded on the YPQT-ON form to determine the appropriate score (1, 3, or 5). If an item was not observed (e.g., conflict), indicate this by writing an "X" in the Evidence box. Complete the Summary by Category table and Observer Notes.
3. At the follow-up meeting, ideally within 2 weeks of the observation, BEFORE sharing the scoring, invite program personnel to engage in a Reflective Discussion (see YPQT-ON for questions). Grounded in this initial discussion, provide program personnel time to review the YPQT-ON evidence and scoring. Then work with program personnel to develop Action Planning Steps, as appropriate for their program context and driven by program personnel.
4. Within 2-4 weeks of the meeting, follow up with relevant resources, professional development opportunities, and/or other supports.

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

## Observation Scoring Tool

### Organization and Program Information

Agency & Program Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Grade(s) Served by Program \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name(s) of Staff Observed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name(s) of Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Observation Date Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Observation Time Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Program Start/End Observed  Start  End \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Staff & Youth # Staff: \_\_\_\_\_ # Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

### Online Program Details

**Type(s) of programs/activities observed:**  
*(select all that apply)*

Literacy                       Tutoring/Homework                       STEM                       Social-Emotional Learning  
 Service-Learning                       Leadership/Advocacy                       Arts                       Health & Wellness  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Delivery Platform:**  
*(describe)*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Online Resource Platforms:**  
*(select all that apply)*

N/A: No shared resource platform  
 Online Cloud Documents or Storage     Website (open-source)     Website (password-protected)  
 Online Learning Management System (LMS) (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Online Instructional Format:**  
*(select all that apply)*

Synchronous ("Live")                       Asynchronous (pre-recorded)                       Blended In-Person Option  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Online Instructional Methods:**  
*(select all that apply)*

Direct Instruction                       Whole Group Discussion                       Chat                       Multimedia (e.g., video)  
 Visual Aides                       Small Groups (breakouts)                       Games                       Polls/Voting  
 One-on-One tutoring     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

## Evidence and Scoring

Following the observation, use your detailed notes to document evidence and determine appropriate scores for each item

**Rating Scales are based on the consistency of strong evidence for each item observed. Please use this guide to help you with scoring:**

**N/A or X** (not able to be observed or not applicable to the session)

**1 - None or Minimal Evidence** (negatively or not observed; minor or minimal evidence)

**3 - Some Evidence** (emerging and/or inconsistent evidence)

**5 - Extensive Evidence** (strong and consistent evidence throughout session)



<b>ONLINE PROGRAM STRUCTURE</b> <i>To what extent is there evidence that...?</i>	N/A X	None or Minimal Evidence 1	Some Evidence 3	Extensive Evidence 5	Documentation / Evidence <i>Must include evidence for 3 or 5</i>
A. Staff sufficiently <b>prepared</b> materials AND varied online engagement opportunities for all youth to access (e.g., discussion, chat, small group activities)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
B. The program <b>schedule</b> is followed (within 10 minutes) AND allows for appropriate activity timing (i.e., positive engagement, activity/session introduction, and closure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
C. Staff give clear <b>instructions</b> AND provide instructions using multiple (2+) techniques (e.g., oral, visual, modeled, repeat-back)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



<b>ONLINE PROGRAM CONTENT</b> <i>To what extent is there evidence that...?</i>	N/A X	1	3	5	Documentation / Evidence <i>Must include evidence for 3 or 5</i>
D. Staff clearly communicate to youth AND follow through with the program's specific <b>objectives</b> (i.e., learning, skill-building, and/or developmental objectives)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. The program content and strategies are <b>developmentally appropriate, offers an appropriate challenge for all youth, and is scaffolded</b> (e.g., builds on prior knowledge or program content)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
F. Staff provide youth the opportunity to engage in <b>active learning</b> (e.g., creating, combining, reforming materials or ideas) and/or <b>skill development</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming



<b>SAFE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT</b> <i>To what extent is there evidence that...?</i>	N/A X	None or Minimal Evidence 1	Some Evidence 3	Extensive Evidence 5	Type(s) of Evidence	Evidence <i>Must include for 3 or 5</i>
G. There is <i>no</i> bias AND there is <i>explicit</i> evidence of mutual respect for the <b>diversity and inclusion</b> of all participants with respect to: religion, ethnicity, English fluency, class, gender, physical ability, online ability, developmental ability, sexual orientation, and/or appearance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth	
H. The <b>emotional climate</b> of the session is predominantly positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, supportive) AND supports social-emotional developmental competencies (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, coping skills, teamwork)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth	
I. The <b>online environment</b> is guided by pro-social online norms (e.g., expectations, routines) and is accessible, safe, monitored, appropriately used AND adjusted by staff and youth to meet program needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth	



<b>SUPPORTIVE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT</b> <i>To what extent is there evidence that...?</i>	N/A X	1	3	5	Type(s) of Evidence	Evidence <i>Must include for 3 or 5</i>
J. There are <b>positive online interactions</b> observed staff-to-youth AND youth-to-youth (e.g., actively involved, friendly, gives positive feedback)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth					
K. Staff model for, and <b>encourage</b> , all youth by providing specific feedback to participants about accomplishments, positive behavior, and/or individual and group performance expectations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth					
L. If conflict arises, staff use <b>conflict as an opportunity</b> for youth voice, learning, or growth and/or youth participate in conflict mediation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth					



<b>ONLINE INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT</b> <i>To what extent is there evidence that...?</i>	N/A X	1	3	5	Type(s) of Evidence	Evidence <i>Must include for 3 or 5</i>
M. Staff actively seek and implement <b>youth feedback</b> into program content and processes (e.g., youth share opinions and experiences; youth make meaningful content and process choices)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth					
N. There are opportunities for youth to demonstrate <b>leadership</b> (e.g., contribute to program responsibilities, teach others, lead an online discussion, share screens for an activity)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth					
O. Youth engage in an intentional process of <b>reflection</b> regarding what they have experienced in the online program?	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff-to-Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Youth-to-Youth					

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

## Summary by Category

	 <b>Program Structure</b>			 <b>Program Content</b>			 <b>Safe Environment</b>			 <b>Supportive Environment</b>			 <b>Interaction &amp; Engagement</b>		
<b>Item Letter</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>O</b>
<b>Item Rating</b> <i>Fill in with X, 1, 3, or 5</i>															

## Observer Notes

Review the summary of item ratings above. What stands out? What patterns, if any emerge?

**Successes**

**Recommendations**

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

## Reflection and Action Planning

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### Reflective Discussion

**What did we do well? What contributed to those successes?**

**If we could start today's session or the program cycle over, what would we do differently? Why?**

### Action Planning

Identify no more than 3 items for focused program improvement this program cycle.

Domain(s)	Item of focus (e.g., Item A, Item B)	Specific steps to improve this focus area	Timeline
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Structure			
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Content			
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Environment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Supportive Environment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Interaction & Engagement			

**When will the follow-up observation take place?** \_\_\_\_\_

*For follow-ups, observers may complete the full tool OR the selected domains or items that align with those identified through action planning.*

# Youth Program Quality Tool for Online Programming

## Sources

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Grounded in high-quality program research and tools, the Online Program Quality Tool was developed by Sharp Insight, LLC, with feedback from the Montgomery County Collaboration Council and Excel Beyond the Bell partners. Key sources include:

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